

## **Background Materials**

### **Workshop**

**Introduction**

**Year 2025 Scenarios**

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**West End Area History**

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### Workshop Results: Introduction

The BRA and the West End Area Planning Group hosted an all-day public workshop on a Saturday in September of 2002. Participants were invited to imagine the year 2025 and to create a depiction—in words, pictures, drawings, and models—of their future neighborhood. The purpose was to focus on long-term goals, and to create comprehensive visions for the area's future.

In order to give examples of the types of choices the planning teams might consider, BRA staff prepared several three-dimensional drawings of the West End Area, each of which represented one possibility—one “scenario”—of what this part of the city might look like in 2025, given a particular set of choices and future conditions. (These scenarios are described in more detail in the next several pages.)

Participants were next divided into small groups (6 to 8 people each) and discussed these scenarios and what about them most concerned or interested them. Each team then determined what specific set of issues they would continue exploring throughout the workshop day.

Each team went to work with an array of tools including a scale model of the neighborhood, maps, photographs of examples of buildings and other urban elements, and materials such as clay, wood, markers, glue and scissors. The groups discussed the issues they had previously identified and sought ways to address these complex planning issues. (For example, a group may have felt most concerned about traffic or pedestrian safety fears, and may have used their time together to identify specific changes in the street pattern as a way of improving this condition.) Participants were asked to think community-wide as well as city-wide, and to think strategically about ways to implement these ideas. After several hours, all of the groups came together again and each group presented their conclusions.

Materials created by the groups have informed the principles of this Framework document. Following are the aforementioned staff-prepared scenarios, and the verbatim notes and model photographs created by each of the seven teams.

### III Background - Workshop Background



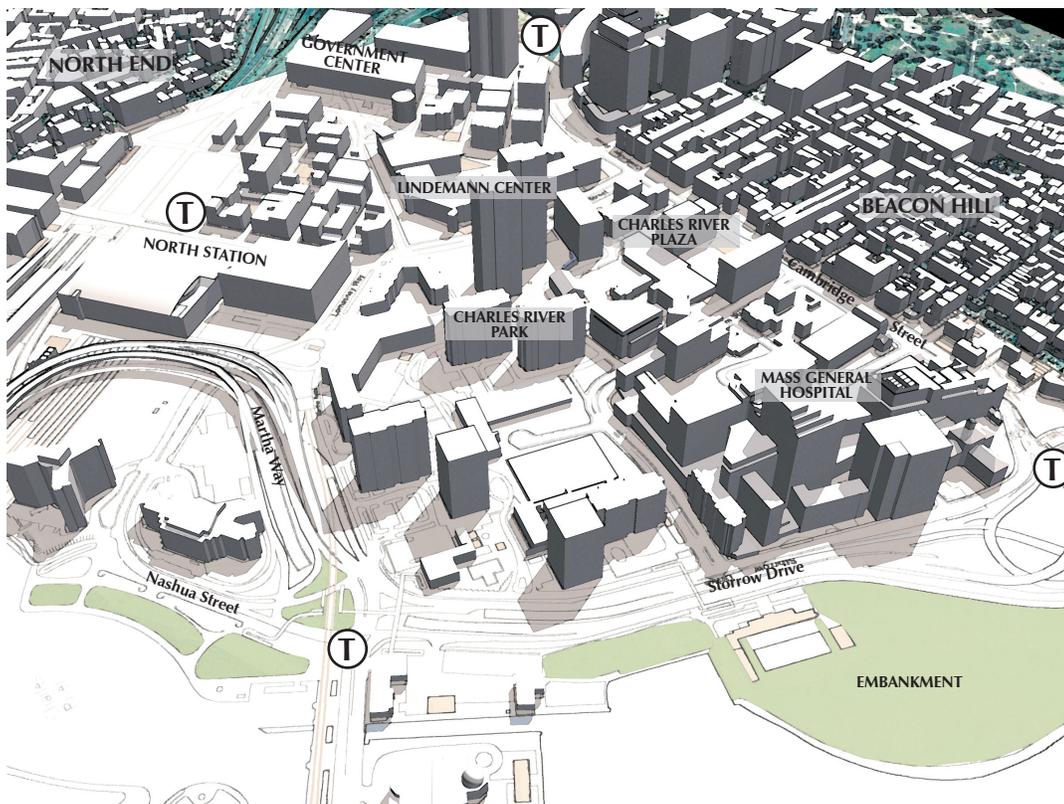
*Workshop participants were divided into seven groups in order to discuss their ideas, concerns and visions for the future of the West End Area. At the end of the team discussions each group presented their findings to the other participants.*

## From the West End Area Workshop of September 14, 2002

### Imagining 2025

#### *Introduction to Workshop Scenarios*

The West End Area is a Boston neighborhood with its own unique history and character. Its principal functions are health care and research, housing for a diverse population, recreation, teaching, shopping, visiting, worship, transportation and office work. The West End Area residential neighborhood (Charles River Park) is a mature community. The Massachusetts General Hospital is perhaps the best teaching, research, and patient-care facility in America. Cambridge Street has a variety of commercial activity and some of Boston's most valuable landmarks. The Embankment is an important element in the Charles River park system. The commuter and inter-city rail system serves the adjacent North Station, while the Green, Orange, and Blue MBTA rapid transit lines have stations in the West End Area. Routes 1, I-93, and Storrow Drive are the primary vehicular arterials. The pedestrian network connects The Embankment to City Hall Plaza. Pedestrians can follow broad sidewalks on Cambridge, Staniford and Merrimac streets, as well as footbridges from the Charles River through the residential area on Thoreau Path to the grand Lindemann Center staircase, the new Brooke Courtyard and on through Government Center. Additionally, the interior MGH Main Corridor from North Grove to Blossom Street creates part of the connection for walkers between Beacon Hill and North Station. Views of City Hall, the Custom House, downtown, the MIT Earth Sciences Building, of



EXISTING CONDITIONS

### WEST END AREA STATISTICS

There are:

4 million square feet of institutional uses

1.4 million square feet of commercial uses

2.3 million square feet of housing

1.1 million square feet of parks

4,300 parking spaces

the new Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge, and the Charles River provide a sense of orientation to the surrounding city. Residents of the mid- and high-rise buildings enjoy a variety of views. The working and resident populations and the general public enjoy a feeling of spaciousness and relief from the hubbub of the city in parts of the West End Area.

As in any lively neighborhood, efforts to improve the quality of life must be an ongoing process. Landscape renewal and more inviting public access would make the parks and greens at The Embankment, MGH and Charles River Park more pleasant for workers, residents and the general public. The residents and working population need more retail services, community facilities, and restaurants. Connections between the West End Area and other city neighborhoods would make the area more accessible and more an integral part of the city. Buildings with shopping activity along Cambridge, Blossom, and Nashua streets would create a more pleasant urban streetscape. Better connections between transportation stations, workplaces and housing would enhance city life. The historic landmarks should have continued use with better public access. Translating the many parking lots and garages into parks, housing, and shops would offer benefits for everyone.

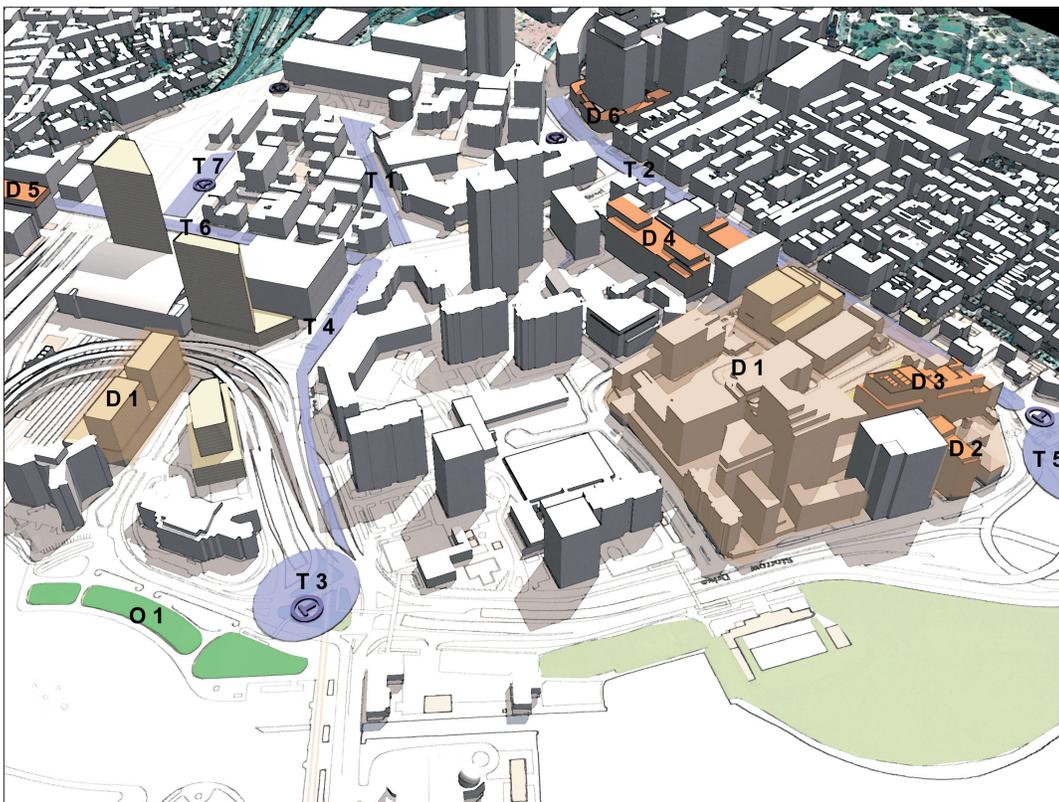
### *Planned Development*

A great deal of new construction is currently underway and planned for in the West End Area. In all, more than 1 million square feet of institutional use, 440,000 square feet of commercial and research use, 250,000 square feet of hotel, 75 housing units, and more than 3,800 parking spaces are planned and proposed. The Central Artery Project will provide much better connections between the West End Area and the airport and highways. The elevated MBTA Green Line will have a new underground route and the Blue Line will have a new station. Cambridge, Nashua, Lomasney, Causeway and Merrimac streets will all have new lights, sidewalks, trees and paving.

These development activities will improve Cambridge Street with a new building including retail ground-floor activity at Charles River Plaza, provide a new ambulatory care facility at MGH, open the landmark Charles Street Jail to the public as a hotel, and remove one of the two large MGH parking garages improving access and image for the hospital.

## Scenarios for Discussion of the West End Area's Future

Four scenarios for the West End Area's future were created by City staff for use in the workshop of September 14, 2002. The purpose of these scenarios was to stimulate discussion of the appropriate and desirable types and scales of change in the West End Area as well as appropriate mitigation for the impacts of the change. These scenarios are explained in detail below.



### PLANNED DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST END AREA

- D1 Spaulding Rehab Development
- D2 MGH
- D3 MGH
- D4 Charles River Plaza
- D5 Supermarket
- D6 Saltonstall Building Redevelopment
- O1 New Nashua Street Park
- T1 Merrimac Street Widening
- T2 Cambridge Street Improvements
- T3 Science Park Station
- T4 Green Line Viaduct Relocation
- T5 Charles Street Station
- T6 Causeway Street Reconstruction
- T7 North Station Super Platform

*Planned development promises to change the vicinity of the West End Area and create conditions for improved livability*

### Scenario: Neighborhood Improvements

This scenario describes change in the form of a variety of modest public realm improvements. Planned development promises to change the vicinity of the West End Area and create conditions for improved livability.

At Charles River Park, improvements could create more inviting entries, renew the landscape, make better connections to Thoreau Path from the T and from surrounding streets, and extend the successful efforts to screen parking lots, garages, and service areas with landscape materials. Without new developments in the residential West End Area, however, the feasibility of replacing garages with below-grade structures, of substantially extending the landscape, building or leasing out more retail space or restaurants or developing new community facilities remains very low.

Even without the completion of its proposed master plan projects in the near term, MGH could improve pedestrian access to the Bulfinch Green from Blossom Street, consolidate service facilities and remove the truck docks from Blossom and Charles streets, create better entries on those streets, replace the temporary structures at the Founders Building and create activity along Blossom Street by locating the more publicly oriented functions like cafeterias and gift shops at street level with access from the sidewalk.

The additional built space created as a part of improving the public benefits included in the MGH Master Plan could include 50,000 square feet of commercial retail space and 200 new housing units on Cambridge and Nashua streets.

### *Scenario: Back Bay Scale*

This scenario describes change similar to the familiar scale of Back Bay.

A modest amount of new development could make feasible desirable community benefits. If some housing were developed at Charles River Park, perhaps along some of the streetfronts at the perimeter of the residential area, it could take the form of three- to five-story brick townhouses similar to those in the Back Bay, the South End, Charlestown, and elsewhere. This amount of development might make possible the construction of underground parking with parks on top to replace the existing garages, lots and parking decks. If the number of residents were increased sufficiently it

#### Scenario:

#### NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Pedestrian circulation and landscape enhancements

#### KEY

Potential new development in Nashua Street area



Potential Community Facilities



Potential Cambridge Street development



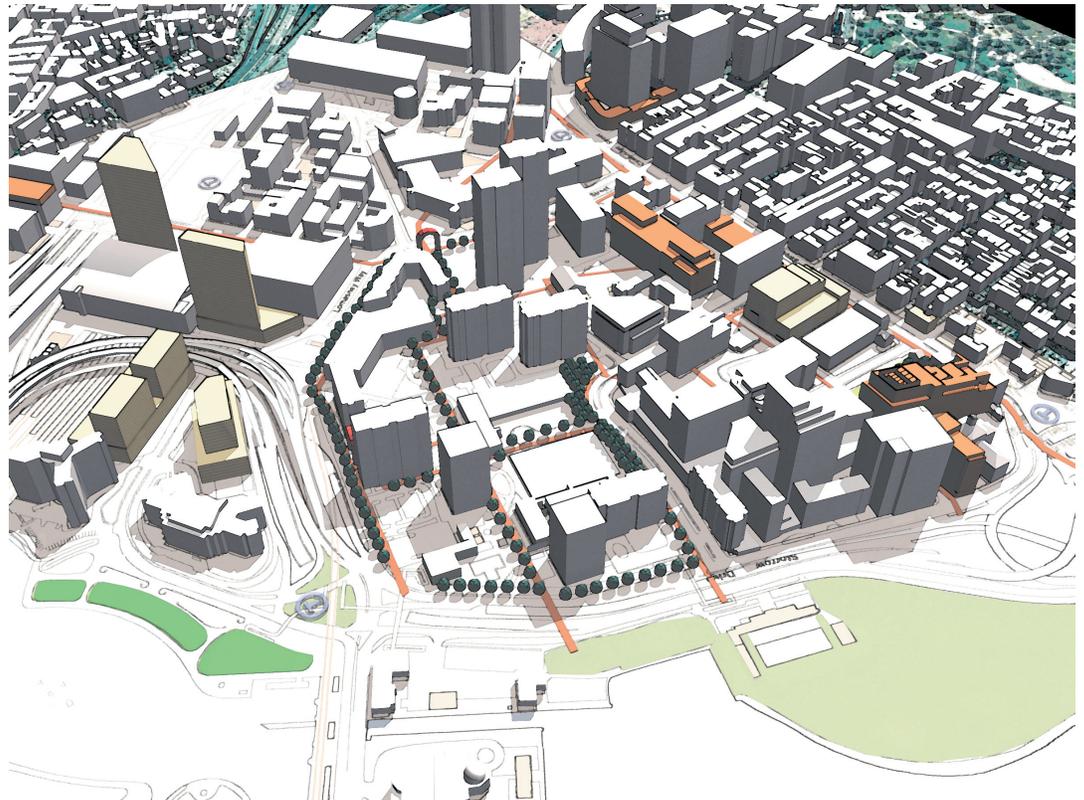
Potential CRP Infill housing



Existing and potential open space



Existing and potential pedestrian connections



would be feasible to expand the area’s shopping facilities. With additional residential development in the Nashua Street area, the buildings at the perimeter of Charles River Park might include restaurants and shops at street level.

An improved system of pedestrian paths would give the sense of city blocks similar in size to more typical Boston blocks. A new park located at the bend in Blossom Street would be visible from Cambridge Street and Charles Street making public open space at Charles River Park more inviting and more a part of the city’s park system.

Maximum build-out in this option would not exceed a total of 1,300 new units if every conceivable site were developed over the 20-year future. New parks might be similar in size to Paul Revere Mall. Commercial and research space at MGH and Nashua Street could total approximately 120,000 square feet.

*Scenario: Historic West End*

This scenario describes change at the scale of the historic West End.

An option that could provide more parks, shops, restaurants, and community facilities would include development of moderate scale and density similar to the historic West End: about 2,200 housing units over a 20-year period including Charles River Park, MGH, and the Nashua Street area. The buildings on Nashua Street would be 15 and 20 floors high. At Charles River Park, no existing residential buildings would be demolished and no park space would be lost. Residents of the ten-, sixteen-, 22-, and



- Option:**  
**BACK BAY SCALE**  
 1,300 new residential units  
 New parks  
 120,000 S.F. of commercial/retail  
 Pedestrian connections
- KEY**
- Potential new development in Nashua Street area
  - Potential Community Facilities
  - Potential Cambridge Street development
  - Potential CRP Infill housing
  - Existing and potential open space
  - Existing and potential pedestrian connections

37-story buildings would continue to enjoy long views. Six-story buildings with street-level shops would line new streets creating an urban fabric of street and block that would be familiar to Bostonians. The interior of each block would be a private green space for the enjoyment of the residents and a large public park with a community center would occupy a prominent location on Blossom Street.

The increase in the resident population would support new stores and restaurants which would contribute to a sense of continuity between the West End Area, North

Scenario:

**HISTORIC WEST END**

2,200 residential units

New green spaces

Large public park and community center

Pedestrian connections to Nashua Street Park and Embankment

KEY

Potential new development in Nashua Street area



Potential Community Facilities



Potential Cambridge Street development



Potential CRP Infill housing



Existing and potential open space



Existing and potential pedestrian connections



Station and the North End. Development of this scale would support improvements in the pedestrian network providing better access to The Embankment and the transit stations.

*Scenario: Towers in the Park*

This scenario describes a future in which residential towers are added to Charles River Park.

If development at Charles River Park continued in the pattern and character of what exists today, one possible outcome would be five new 30-story towers with very slender profiles. Existing buildings and parks would remain. The increase in housing units over the 20 years would be about 2,000 at Charles River Park and 1,800 in the Nashua Street area.

This large-scale development would allow a dramatic increase in parkland, and for all parking spaces to be relocated below ground. Shops and community facilities would become much more feasible than with a lesser amount of new development. An increase as large as this would address the city's housing shortage significantly, but would likely alter the character of the neighborhood substantially.

*Note: These scenarios were intended to serve only as illustrative starting points for conversation at the public workshop, and do not represent formal plans or proposals.*



**Scenario:**  
**TOWERS IN THE PARK**  
 3,800 new residential units  
     2,000 in Charles River Park  
     1,800 at Nashua Street  
 Major public parks and community center  
 New shops and services

- KEY**
- Potential new development in Nashua Street area
  - Potential Community Facilities
  - Potential Cambridge Street development
  - Potential CRP Infill housing
  - Existing and potential open space
  - Existing and potential pedestrian connections

The following section summarizes the seven workshop team's ideas for the future of the West End Area

## WORKSHOP RESULTS

The following pages contain the summaries of each workshop group's ideas as well as the full text of their notes from the event.

### GROUP 1 SUMMARY

#### Theme: WEST END COMMUNITY PLACE

##### Main Ideas:

- Low Density
- Open Space
- Accessible Neighborhood Amenities

##### Summary:

Group 1 focused on a concentrated area, Charles River Park and West End Place, within the context of the planning framework. Members chose to disregard the BRA scenarios and created lists of Visions, Likes and Concerns for the area. A lot of stress was placed on the provision of adequate, safe, attractive green/open space in the area along with family oriented amenities, such as playgrounds and an affordable supermarket. Strategies for achieving the visions were discussed. Possible options included demolishing the Garden Garage and replacing it with a mixed-use building including underground parking, a supermarket, a school, and residential uses on top (no more that 100 feet in height). A playground was also suggested at that site.



Summary of concepts developed by Group 1

Two- to three-story (clustered) townhouses with setbacks and open space were envisioned at the existing Emerson Place parking deck.

##### Verbatim Notes:

1. Low density
2. More open space; retention of existing open space-usable; accessible green space
3. Playground-place for kids
4. Provide adequate parking for all incomes
5. Appropriate residential-related retail spaces

### GROUP 1 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED

6. Affordable and accessible supermarket
7. Visually aesthetically pleasing
8. Blend in with the neighbors (institutional, Bulfinch Triangle, Beacon Hill...)
9. Institutions-make them more friendly
10. Neighborhood schools: elementary-K-6
11. Streetlight and sunlight "Where there's light, there's life".
12. Lomasney Way: more pedestrian friendly
13. Limousine parking lot at Fleet Center
14. Residential parking stickers
15. More residential
16. Improved traffic/pedestrian ways
17. Liven streetscape at Lindemann/Hurley building; i.e.: retail at street level
18. Lindemann/Hurley building: good location for a school

#### How we feel the West End should be: Likes:

1. Accessible transportation
2. Open areas/parks
3. Possibility of (limited) key retail space at Charles River Plaza
4. Sense of community/neighborhood
5. Safety/security: good but can be enhanced

#### Garden Garage:

1. Taking it down and putting up multi-use
2. Rather have 20/30 stories there than hear the honking of cars (West End Place)

#### Concerns:

1. Adequate parking-underground parking so as not to take away from open space
2. More safety
3. Congestion-overpopulate: too many buildings too close together
4. Flow of traffic-amount-bottle-necking
5. Impact on property values
6. Noise and dirt (Big Dig and construction)
7. Make the West End more accessible
8. "Front door" looks good
9. Improve signage
10. No residential parking permits
11. Enforcement of existing Urban Renewal Plan
12. Playground at North Station is gone
13. Views
14. Pedestrian traffic: MGH to Blossom Court
15. Leverett Circle, I-93 traffic
16. Charles Street Jail: wrong location for a jail

#### Strategies:

1. Achieving a supermarket/school/parking/residential ?
2. Clustered townhouses with open space - balancing building with green space
3. Traffic improvements: signage/lighting/better parking management, pedestrian/vehicular underpass/overpass

## GROUP 2 SUMMARY

### Theme: WEST END FUSION

#### Main Ideas:

(See Summary)

#### Summary:

The Group did not define three specific principles, but concepts useable as principles emerged toward the end of the session. Fusion derives from combining the elements of several of the discussion diagrams: moderate density, towers at edges or very slim in the center, mostly townhouse scale to keep and to define the sense of open spaces, improving the pedestrian footpaths and giving them a public presence, adding just enough density to make more active/viable retail possible.

To initiate conversation, we utilized red and green dots respectively to “vote” for schemes that engendered either concern or interest. Although votes changed as schemes were clarified, the initial postings were (number of the group including facilitator and staff were 6):

Concerned: Max Towers 3, Historic West End 1, Neighborhood 2.

Interested: Max Towers 2, Historic West End 2, Neighborhood 2.



Group 2 presents their ideas



Summary plan prepared by Group 2

#### Verbatim Notes:

- Building nothing is not realistic; therefore, prefer the towers in a park setting as a concept (keeps original idea).
- The neighborhood is not isolated now, lots of people (commuters to Mass General etc.) cut through it. Some Fleet Center events result in nightmarish intrusions.
- MODEST development is key. There is gridlock now. Even 500 units (total) is a concern. More activity and density would be hard to conceive, but an enhanced neighborhood improvements scheme might be acceptable.
- More residents would be required to support more (desired) retail space and activity. But one has to be careful about roads, what they connect.
- Towers (as shown) would add too much density; there should be low-rise housing

#### GROUP 2 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED

- with families to replace the existing surface parking.
- There is an inherent difference in philosophies, that of the towers vs. lower scales at the same density....concerns about shadows and views vs. defining pathways.
- What might work is a varied townhouse scheme, using both ('Back Bay', 'Historic West End') scales to define the edges, cover the parking, and keep a sense of the open space from the upper levels.
- Enhancement/improvement of the pathways is good, but not necessarily from major venues such as the Fleet Center.
- Traffic flows along Cambridge Street (et al.) are a concern, especially with projects such as the MGH Master Plan. What can be done to improve flows?
- A pedestrian pathway through the MGH campus from Cambridge Street to Blossom Street should be created, as open and as 24-hour as possible.
- A consistent treatment of street furniture and lights should be used to create a West End identity; currently there are 8 different light fixtures along Blossom. Although this could vary sub-area (MGH) by sub-area, or along the perimeter streets, Blossom should be considered as a gateway into the West End.
- NO MGH EXPANSION should be allowed in the residential area, but more would be fine at Nashua Street.
- Better pathways and wayfinding systems should be created, although serving primarily employees and residents.
- A community center and wintergarden with more retail could be built at the J. Pace & Sons building site. J. Pace & Sons is a great asset.
- The area should be cleaned up, dealing with the 'little dead corners.' Underutilized space should be turned into utilized, useful, and/or un-ugly (beautiful) space.
- An urban market or supermarket should be created; this could be done at the garage site (too much in future?) Or, at the site between Longfellow Place and West End Place, which could also have the benefit of improving the entry from Staniford Street and the other retail spaces. The walkway to the upper level should be maintained, and a two-level urban market was proposed (via examples in a notebook assembled by Sandy Swaile).
- If there are towers at all, they could be somewhat larger at the edges - for example, the garage (Basketball City) site could be 16-20 stories atop a broader base. This could be combined with a very slim tower in the center, and/or high townhouses (5-7 stories) in limited infills on the surface parking platform sites and along the other edges (i.e., between Storrow and Emerson).
- This would keep the sense of open space which functions differently at different levels, providing modest shaping of the green 'rooms' which are the essence of the new West End but allowing the sense of defined larger space created by the (possibly expanded) existing configuration from the upper floors.
- Public Art should have a place in any improvements.
- Green or shaped, concealing, rooftops should be designed for the top of the lower buildings
- The townhouse scale could be used to define the MGH edge but also, in a courtyard configuration, provide play yard space connecting to the pathway system.
- Thoreau Path itself should be considered as a community gathering space, with art, fountains, benches, lighting, etc.
- Larger units (3-4 bedrooms) geared toward families are desirable.

**GROUP 3 SUMMARY**

**Theme: PERMEABLE ENCLAVE**

**Main Ideas:**

- Infill with low-rise to mid-rise residential with retail support.
- Improved pedestrian access through the West End.
- Green space to be maximized with future development.

**Summary:**

Much of the discussion centered on the West End residential units at Longfellow Place, Whittier Place, Emerson Place and Hawthorne Place and how they will be impacted by future development. There was great concern about the size of any development within the West End and that it should not be high-rise due to a concern about blocked views. Four- to five-story residential with retail on the street level was preferred. There was a consensus that more residential units were important to the West End. As an example, the proposed transportation center on Nashua Street could have a residential use on top and possibly a related facility over the tracks. Green space with enhanced pedestrian walkways are important to future development. Added residential units could require a school in the area as well as a supermarket. It was suggested that a bus route on Cambridge Street be considered. However, the extension of the Blue Line to the Red Line at Charles Station would provide better service to Logan Airport and be a great benefit. Science Park Station needs to be upgraded. In short, more residential with retail is the goal.



*Summary plan produced by Group 3*

Verbatim Notes:**GROUP 3 WORKSHOP  
NOTES CONTINUED**1. OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE

- Create a permeable “enclave”
- “Bowl” Epicenter
- Infill low-rise and mid-rise residential mixed with retail services to support increased population.
- Within framework of current plan, low-rise residential which preserves maximum accessible green space.

2. LOCATE CONNECTIONS AND GATEWAY• Enhance:*Thoreau Path*

- Signage
- Landscaping
- Lighting
- Blossom Court
- Possible residential low-rise street wall

*Remove WEP Gate*

- Improve stairway by Longfellow Place (widen, more open, etc.)
- Blossom Street
- Everything! (street wall (MGH), lighting, landscaping, etc.)
- Staniford, Lomasney and Martha Road
- Enhance pedestrian experience.

3. MIX & LOCATION OF USES*MODEL*4. DEVELOP OPEN SPACE & STREETSCAPE CONCEPTS

- *All open spaces should be accessible and friendly – better balance between institutional – better balance between institutional fortress-like buildings & residential abutters.*

5. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

- Improve Science Park MBTA
- Connect Blue Line to Red Line

6. AMENITIES

- Supermarket
- School
- Service Retail

## GROUP 4 SUMMARY

### Theme: WEST END VILLAGE

#### Main Ideas:

- Integration  
Connect the institutional and residential parts of the West End more strongly with pedestrian paths; connect the West End to the rest of the city; avoid appearance of a gated community; provide common areas on neutral ground.
- Balance of Uses  
Create more residential and retail space to balance institutional uses; provide more recreation space; provide more community services.
- Preserve and Enhance Park Character  
Preserve pedestrian zones; improve open space at the Park, MGH and Embankment; define and connect paths at the Park and at MGH to the world outside.

#### Summary:

The group expressed a wide variety of opinions ranging from endorsement of new residential and commercial development on Nashua Street and at the periphery of the district but not at the Park, to interest in new Back Bay style and 6-story housing in the Park with high-rise, mixed-use development of Nashua Street and the Fleet Center area. The prevailing sentiment favored new development only as required to finance 1) improved landscapes, better entries, more paths connected to exterior streets, and removal of garages and their replacement with more open space within the Park; 2) improved open space, pedestrian routes, and access points at MGH, but no MGH expansion into residential areas; and 3) new housing, retail, commercial and open space development along the Cambridge Street and Nashua Street edges. The



*Summary plan produced by Group 4*

group favored better integration of the working and residential populations and new facilities to accommodate interaction, more opportunities for shopping and recreation, and better connections between the West End and the rest of the city.

#### GROUP 4 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED

#### Verbatim Notes:

- Don't call residential area "Charles River Park"; CRP refers to Equity's property; call it "The West End"; subsequently often referred to as "The Park"
- Call this vision "West End Village"
- Enhance pedestrian entries to West End, MGH
- Blossom Street presents impenetrable wall
- Retain park-like character of residential area
- Develop Nashua Street as a residential and retail area, not as institutional expansion
- 500 new units at The Park is a concern
- Build 'people places' at Registry site and elsewhere on Nashua with housing and retail
- Enhance the Boston Common character of The Park
- Use sculpture and fountains to improve the park
- Question: Who owns Thoreau Path?
- Concern about new housing only at Emerson
- Possible new housing at Emerson
- Open connections to the rest of the city; connect Thoreau Path to Blossom Street
- Increase the amount of green space at The Park
- Enhance The Park as a residential oasis, not a residential island
- Embrace the city; don't shun the city
- Existing paths aren't clear and accessible
- West End feels like a wall
- Connect Beacon Hill through MGH, through West End, through Nashua Street to North Station
- Front of J. Pace's store is community oriented but back is not welcoming
- Renovate rear of commercial and create more open space
- Add street-level retail and new housing to the (4B) program
- Need more retail use at edges; need restaurants on Blossom Street
- We've lost all our restaurants
- Lindemann Center is dead at night
- Fleet events need restaurants
- Too much traffic at Leverett Circle
- Whittier can't get out to Martha Road when there are events at Fleet; this will get worse with MGH Transportation Building
- Too much noise by Fleet events
- Want a supermarket at Lindemann
- Bread and Circus is not a supermarket; it's a high-priced specialty store
- Don't put supermarket in West End residential area
- MGH recently bought another residential unit at Whittier; institutional expansion is a threat
- Charles Street is lifeless

#### GROUP 4 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED

- Make a stronger connection to The Embankment (like Harvard Yard over Cambridge Street) with open space, residential, and retail uses
- Neighborhood is too dependent on federal funding of research
- MGH should expand in other parts of the city
- Need better integration of residential, institutional, and retail activity
- Bring back commercial services to streets
- Put hospital stores and cafeterias on the exterior
- Enhance connections between West End, North Station, and North End
- More density at edges to support retail and parks
- Want school and playground; make West End more child-oriented
- Put low-rise housing on garage sites at The Park
- Provide residential use at 4B and Nashua Street
- No more housing in the West End
- Housing should set back from the streets
- Build housing at 4B to 65'
- Build Back Bay-style housing on Nashua
- Build high-rise housing on Nashua and at Garden Garage
- Build 6 or 7 story housing on Nashua
- Provide setbacks above five floors for taller building
- New housing at Emerson should be a range of heights but not taller than existing
- Build Back Bay style housing at garage sites
- High-rise housing on Nashua for elderly, assisted living, connecting to North End
- High-rise housing "big time" on Nashua Street
- Oppose parking MGH North Station site
- Eliminate stairs between Thoreau Path and Staniford Street; make smooth connection
- Keep name of "West End Village"
- Theme 1: Integration
  - Pedestrian connections through Park to Blossom and to Martha Way
  - Better access to commercial activity
  - Need a civic center
  - Architecture should look unified
  - Link pedestrians under ramps to Nashua from the Park
  - Better entries to Park to avoid "gated" feeling
  - Pedestrian links from the Park to Cambridge Street and North Station
  - Enhance seamlessness between Beacon Hill, West End and North End
  - Provide more common areas, neutral ground, community focal points
  - Need handicap access to river edge
  - Make street fronts more active, more welcoming, more lively, more continuous

- Theme 2: Balance of Uses
  - More housing (at periphery) to balance institutional use
  - More retail
  - Residential, retail, office, but not institutional on Nashua
  - More taxpaying uses, (e.g., supermarket)
  - Improve social infrastructure: school, MDC pool, library addition
  - Need a community center
  - Lots of retail on Cambridge Street
  - Street front retail on Blossom
  - Recreation zone around Leverett Circle on Embankment
  
- Theme 3: Preserve Park Character
  - Preserve and improve Thoreau Path as the heart of the residential community
  - Park
  - Preserve the pedestrian zone
  - Enhance Embankment
  - Improve MGH open spaces and make them more **accessible**

**GROUP 4 WORKSHOP  
NOTES CONTINUED**

## GROUP 5 SUMMARY

### Theme: WEST END RENAISSANCE

#### Main Ideas:

- Better connections: to other communities, institutions, the river and parks systems, transit, transportation, and within the neighborhood
- More housing: affordable, appropriate scale and density, diversity of types, appropriately located
- Maintaining maximum amount of open space—diverse in type, scale and size; and eliminate surface parking

#### Summary:

The notes below reflect individual statements and ideas from our group members, although the degree to which the comments suit each other reveals the extent to which consensus existed in our group. We feel our principles speak for themselves; although some of the issues we discussed do not show up in the above list. These include:

- *While we like a mix of “Back Bay” and “Historic West End” scales, we believe that building higher at the edge of our neighborhood near the Fleet Center (and its future developments), making sure to include some housing, makes a lot of sense.*
- *We do not really like the idea of new roads, but as our model shows, we feel it might be possible to address internal circulation and accommodate growth with a certain configuration of low-rise blocks.*
- *Some ground-floor retail—not big chain stores, however—is appropriate in some places.*



Summary plan produced by Group 5

Verbatim Notes:**GROUP 5 WORKSHOP  
NOTES CONTINUED**

- Change around us [is] okay.
- Change within [CRP] – landscape improvements only are okay
- If Change comes inside [CRP], we like BACK BAY scale, or some of us like a BLEND OF BACK BAY & HISTORIC WEST END SCALES AND STYLE.
- There is a desire to replace lost retail.
- There is a desire for more / better pedestrian / bicycle pathways.
- We like the idea of exploring a stand-alone community facility.
- We like what J. Pace's has brought [place to sit outside and meet and interact with people].
- To some of us, it does not currently feel like a community, and we'd like a community facility with more services for seniors. Recently, there seems to be increased community organizing, which is a good thing!
- Support / nurture / augment current services and tell others (institutions, businesses, civic groups) how they can help [financially and otherwise].
- Outside forces (economy, institutional, etc.) have impacts within the neighborhood. We should avoid confrontation, and achieve reciprocal benefits.
- We appreciate the low crime rate, good security that we feel results from the contained quality of the area.
- The worst thing about our area is the architecture. Employ Design Review processes to get better design in the future.
- We'd like to be more connected to other parts of the city through development (housing, some retail) in the surrounding areas.
- We need connecting elements.
- We like a lot of green space, to be maintained and improved, with additional benches. Thoreau Path needs an improved surface.
- We would like safer street crossings.
- Light, wind and shadow impacts should be considered.
- Encourage lower-density buildings.
- Open up as a neighborhood, through mixed-use development at the edges.
- The residential community enlivens a viable West End.
- Predominantly residential inside, with a healthy mix
- More open space—create different types, sizes and character of it—and put parking underground.
- We need affordable housing.

**GROUP 6 SUMMARY**

**Theme: NOT NAMED**

**Main Ideas:**

*Three principle ideas:*

- Preserve green open space
- Any development on Nashua Street or in the Bulfinch Triangle should be mostly residential with mixed-use
- Don't increase density; replace other land uses with residential

*Implementation strategies/tools:*

- Zone the area to be residential
- Reduce FAR and height limits
- Provide tax and other incentives to developers
- Strictly enforce zoning and the Charles River Park Urban Renewal Plan

**Summary:**

- The preservation and enhancement of the open space in the West End should be the highest priority. To that end, new high-rise development should be limited to the North Station area. Increased density in the West End should be avoided because it would block views, increase traffic, and reduce the amount of open space. The central green space at the Emerson/Whittier parking garages would be enhanced by placing the parking underground and providing park space at the surface. Blossom Street needs additional landscaping to make it fit into the image of the West End.
- The West End is a highly walkable neighborhood. Its "tower in the park" design provides pleasant walkways that are quiet and safe away from the busy city streets. Active uses along street frontage should be encouraged and could provide needed services and goods for the neighborhood .
- There are limited sites suitable for new development and those should be low-rise in character.



*Summary plan produced by Group 6*

Verbatim Notes:**GROUP 6 WORKSHOP  
NOTES CONTINUED***Nashua Street*

- Low-rise housing, with an affordable component, over retail should be located on Nashua Street in a mix of five- and eight-story buildings.
- Nashua Street is currently a no-man's land. It needs housing with mixed use. The MGH/Spaulding site and the Registry site should be mixed use – residential over retail. This is a potential site for a supermarket but not an optimal location.
- Make the jail into condos – it's a prime site.
- Include active recreational uses in the Nashua Street Park.
- The West End has enough high-rise buildings already. Limit new high-rise construction to the North Station area, like the Fleet Center towers.

*Bulfinch Triangle*

- Heights of new buildings in the Bulfinch Triangle should match the adjacent existing buildings. Open space should be included in the Bulfinch Triangle.
- The Bulfinch Triangle is a possible site for a supermarket, but it's a second choice.
- The Bulfinch Triangle should be residential or office over retail.
- There need to be stronger connections to the North End

*MGH*

- The Bulfinch Lawn at MGH should be open to the public and have improved unrestricted access from Blossom Street.
- Limit helicopter idling – it creates too much noise.
- Hide the mechanical equipment on the MGH buildings.

*New Development*

- Replacing parking with housing is not placing the housing in the best location.
- Housing should not be built on the Equity parking garage site. The parking should be underground [freeing up the land for green space].
- Low-rise housing would fit along Storrow Drive adjacent to Emerson.
- Existing buildings on Blossom need first floor access and activity.
- There needs to be more affordable housing, particularly for seniors. The 15% senior population has increased.
- The Lomasney Way garage site should be redeveloped but the height of the new building should not exceed the height of the existing structure.
- If the Lomasney Way garage were redeveloped, it would be a good site for a senior drop-in center.

*Desired Uses*

- There is a need for a more affordable supermarket than Bread & Circus.
- A movie theater within walking distance would be good; perhaps in the Lindemann building.
- Provide commercial uses along Cambridge Street. Including a supermarket and small restaurants.
- Expand J. Pace's.

*Open Space*

- The Blossom Street parking/Emerson parking should become a public park with a playground.
- The Whittier Place parking should become improved green space.
- Develop green space at Emerson next to Charles Street.

### GROUP 6 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED

- Blossom Street needs to be landscaped – more trees.
- Convert the existing outdoor tennis and basketball courts [next to the garage] to green space.
- Preserve the courtyard at the Lindeman Building.
- More parks and playgrounds are desired. Also, a Boys and Girls Club should be included in any community center.
- There needs to be more (affordable) recreational opportunities for adults and children.
- The MDC pool is never open and should be reopened.
- Add a kid's playground to the MDC esplanade.

#### *Pedestrian Access*

- The existing pathways are heavily used and need to be preserved.
- Kids play on the pedestrian paths.
- Provide continuous pedestrian access through MGH to Cambridge Street (north-south) and from Blossom to Charles (east-west).
- Provide through-building connections – particularly in the winter – like Toronto and Montreal.
- People cannot cut through MGH after 6:00 PM because access is restricted.
- The existing paths work well within the West End, but there are problems with wind.
- Better signage would help.

#### *Parking*

- Move parking underground.
- Any new buildings need parking and any new parking should be underground.
- There needs to be recognition of the amount of parking a supermarket needs.

#### *Roads and Traffic*

- Discourage through traffic on Blossom Street.
- If a connection to Blossom Street from Storrow Drive is created, traffic lights need to be installed at all intersections. New development will also make additional traffic signals necessary along Blossom Street and O'Connell Way.

#### *General Comments*

- The original urban renewal plan for the area has coherence. The repetition of [streetscape] elements, not only buildings, ties it all together.

#### *What's good about the West End. What to keep.*

- Open space
- Greenery
- Economic diversity
- Existing density – more development would cause unbalance.
- Walkability
- Quiet – the pedestrian paths are away from the street.
- New building would block views
- The Regina Cleary building should stay as is.
- The pool and health club is an important community resource
- Bulfinch Lawn is great
- Holiday Inn is a good resource – as well as the other hotel
- Stores are important.

**Theme: BUILDING EDGES**

**GROUP 7 SUMMARY**

**Main Ideas:**

- Residential development at the perimeter—along Nashua Street, Martha Road and Lomasney Way, around the edges of a new park created by the demolition of the central parking garage.
- Improve pedestrian connections and accessibility
- Create a supermarket at Staniford and Merrimac streets, and expand neighborhood retail by expanding the market for neighborhood retail.
- Green the area!

**Summary:**

- Charles River Park is a strong, cohesive community, which makes it a safe and pleasant place to live. These characteristics must be preserved. New development should only happen where there is opportunity to enhance the area—low-rise residences in replacement of parking garages but linked with open space; and to activate and define the edges of the district. Open space should be preserved and expanded. Views from existing buildings should be preserved. There are two primary areas in which to pursue improvement—pedestrian/bicycle connections and accessibility, and expansion of neighborhood retail, especially in the form of a supermarket at the corner of Staniford and Merrimac streets.
- The Nashua Street area and the Bulfinch Triangle district are opportunities to increase mixed-use residential uses in the city, especially with taller buildings in Nashua Street that do not obstruct views. The Bulfinch Triangle should be treated as a connector from Charles River Park to the North End.



Summary plan produced by Group 7

### GROUP 7 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED

#### Verbatim Notes:

##### *Pedestrian improvements*

- Improve safety and convenience at street crossings. Specifically mentioned were intersections along Cambridge Street, Staniford Street, Causeway and North Washington Streets. Intersection should feature quicker signal response, and/or tunnel or bridge crossings.
- Expand accessibility, especially at Science Park Station.
- Use pedestrian paths, not streets, to define blocks.
- Have to make good connections to new developments like at Nashua Street.
- Make pedestrian walkways and bike route more navigable.
- Enhance the streetscape along Blossom Street with street trees and other improvements.

##### *Development*

- Nashua Street area can go up 7-8 stories if careful not to block any views. Could be configured as garage below, mid-rise residential above.

##### *Parking*

- Put parking underground.

##### *Land Uses*

- Create a supermarket with parking, at the corner of Staniford and Merrimac. In the Nashua Street development area is another alternative. The supermarket could provide shared parking for the Fleet Center to remove event traffic off-street.
- Expand neighborhood retail in general.
- Work with Bread and Circus to enhance access for seniors, through senior discounts or a small annex sited in the midst of the neighborhood.
- Create affordable housing so the younger generations growing up in the city can stay – in the Bulfinch Triangle.

##### *Philosophical approaches*

- Find a balance between integration and discrete districts.
- Look at the neighborhood for its potential for a live-work district in coordination with MGH.
- Preserve sense of community.
- Preserve security and safety – it's the safest neighborhood in the city because only residents [and MGHers] are there.
- It is very important to preserve views from existing buildings – when you live in a high-rise, you have a view instead of a yard.
- Don't cut up the cohesiveness of the area with streets.
- Increase density at the edges, not the central portion (low development only).
- Consider and develop the Bulfinch Triangle as a connector between the North End and Charles River Park
- Consider sun/wind impacts.
- Look for opportunities to create roof parks.
- Make a place for clients of the social service agencies to spend time, perhaps in the Nashua Street development.

#### *Dot voting*

Back Bay Scale got the following green dots:

- On the comment, “Modest development can finance a modest increase in neighborhood amenities in addition to the improvements shown in the ‘Neighborhood Improvement’ option.
- On Nashua Street development – “tall/dense but thin w/o blocking views”
- On Basketball City garage – “Res/Ht”

The following red dots:

- On the internal, low-rise residential development – “less development” residential with modest height, 3-5 stories
- On Parkman Street

Other notes

- Bulfinch Triangle mixed use
- Supermarket at Staniford and Merrimac.

Modern Towers got the following green dots:

- “View” preserved from Whittier Place, if tall buildings are built in the Nashua Street area.
- The following red dots:
- On the two new towers shown near Longfellow Place.

#### **GROUP 7 WORKSHOP NOTES CONTINUED**

